

News

United States
Department
of Labor



Bureau of Labor Statistics

New York Office

Internet Address: <http://www.bls.gov/ro2/home.htm>

Information: Martin Kohli, (212) 337-2420

FOR RELEASE: June 5, 2006

Media Contact: Michael L. Dolfman, (212) 337-2500

Fax-On-Demand: (212) 337-2412

AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGES IN NEW JERSEY: THIRD QUARTER 2005 PASSAIC COUNTY'S 19.0-PERCENT WAGE GROWTH LEADS NATION, SOMERSET COUNTY HAS HIGHEST WAGE IN STATE

In the third quarter 2005, the average weekly wage in Passaic County increased 19.0 percent over the year, the largest increase among New Jersey's 15 counties with employment of 75,000 or more, according to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. Regional Commissioner Michael L. Dolfman noted that Passaic County's wage growth was also the largest percentage increase among the 322 largest counties in the nation, well above the 6.1-percent national average. Of the 15 large counties in New Jersey, Somerset's average weekly wage of \$1,148 was the highest in the State and 10th highest in the nation, surpassing the national level by \$371. Among New Jersey's largest counties, 4 had wage gains above the national average, but 12 had wage levels above that for the nation in the third quarter of 2005.

Gloucester County had the highest percentage increase in employment over the year, up 4.0 percent in September 2005. The counties of Somerset (3.2 percent) and Mercer (2.8 percent) were the only other large counties in New Jersey with job growth higher than the national increase of 2.0 percent. (See table 1.)

At the state level, the average weekly wage in New Jersey increased 5.8 percent to \$928 in the third quarter of 2005. While New Jersey's wage growth was below the national average of 6.1 percent, the State's average weekly wage was about 19 percent higher than the U.S. average of \$777. The average weekly wage in New Jersey ranked fifth highest in the nation behind the wages in the District of Columbia (\$1,265), Connecticut (\$966), Massachusetts (\$947), and New York (\$941), and ahead of California's (\$887). (See table 2.)

Wage levels

Among the 15 largest counties in New Jersey, 12 had average weekly wages exceeding the \$777 nationwide average. Somerset, Morris, and Hudson Counties led the State with weekly wages averaging \$1,000 or more, ranking them in the top 15 nationally; all three of these counties were located in the northern part of New Jersey. (See chart 1.) Six other counties (Bergen, Essex, Mercer,



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Middlesex, Passaic, and Union) had wages averaging from \$900 to \$999, placing this group among the top 40 highest-paying counties in the U.S. Another three counties (Burlington, Camden, and Monmouth) had wages exceeding \$800 and ranked in the top 100 among the 322 largest counties nationally. Three counties in the southern part of the State—Atlantic, Ocean, and Gloucester—had average weekly wages below that for the nation. Ocean County's wage of \$669 was the lowest among New Jersey's large counties.

Of the 322 large counties in the nation, New York County, N.Y., recorded the highest average weekly wage, \$1,419, in the third quarter of 2005. Santa Clara, Calif., was second with an average weekly wage of \$1,403, followed by Arlington, Va., (\$1,292), San Mateo, Calif., (\$1,268), and Washington D.C. (\$1,265). Three of the 10 counties with the highest wages were located in the greater New York metropolitan area (New York, N.Y., Fairfield, Conn., and Somerset, N.J.), 3 others were located in and around the San Francisco area (Santa Clara, San Mateo, and San Francisco in California), while 3 more were located in or around the Washington D.C. metropolitan area (Arlington, Va., Washington, D.C., and Fairfax, Va.). The lowest average weekly wage was reported in Cameron County, Texas (\$486), followed by the counties of Hidalgo, Texas (\$499), and Horry, S.C. (\$505), and Webb, Texas, and Yakima, Wash. (\$525 each).

Over-the-year changes

Four of New Jersey's large counties recorded over-the-year wage growth greater than the national average of 6.1 percent in the third quarter of 2005, with Passaic's 19.0-percent wage gain ranking first in the nation. Three other counties (Burlington, Camden, and Ocean) had wage growth in the 7.7 to 7.9-percent range. Among the 10 New Jersey counties with wage growth below the national increase, Middlesex County recorded the lowest gain, 2.0 percent, followed by the counties of Hudson, 4.0 percent, and Somerset, 4.4 percent. Wage gains in these three counties, among the best paid in New Jersey, ranked in the bottom third nationwide among the 322 largest counties. None of New Jersey's 15 largest counties, however, experienced an over-the-year decline in wages.

Passaic County, New Jersey, was not the only county in the nation with double-digit wage growth in the third quarter of 2005. Average weekly wages in Fort Bend, Texas, grew 15.4 percent; in Boulder, Colo., wages increased 13.8 percent, and in San Mateo, Calif., and Harrison, Miss., gains of 12.7 percent were recorded. Wage growth in Harrison, Miss., and Orleans, La. (10.7 percent), were boosted as a result of the disproportionate job and pay losses in the lower-paid industries following Hurricane Katrina. Five large counties experienced over-the-year declines in weekly wages. Clayton County, Ga., experienced the largest decrease (-5.1 percent), followed by the counties of Benton, Ark. (-1.2 percent), Trumbull, Ohio (-0.6 percent), Saginaw, Mich. (-0.4 percent), and St. Joseph, Ind. (-0.1 percent).

Employment

Among the 15 large counties in New Jersey, employment ranged from a high of 450,200 in Bergen to a low of 105,200 in Gloucester in September 2005. Three of these counties surpassed the nation's 2.0-percent rate of employment growth from September 2004, with the highest percentage increase occurring in Gloucester County (4.0 percent). Three of New Jersey's large counties shed jobs over the year—Passaic, down 0.2 percent, and Middlesex and Morris, both down 0.1 percent.

Nationally, Lee County, Fla., which includes Fort Meyers, had the largest percentage increase in employment, 11.4 percent. Employment declined in 35 of the 322 large counties, with the steepest drop occurring in Orleans County, La. (-26.3 percent). Job losses in Orleans County, as well as the counties of Jefferson, La. (-25.6 percent), and Harrison, Miss. (-13.9 percent), reflected the destruction caused by Hurricane Katrina.

Average weekly data by county are compiled under the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) program, also known as the ES-202 program. The data are derived from reports submitted by employers subject to state and federal unemployment insurance (UI) laws. The 8.6 million employer reports cover 132.9 million full- and part-time jobs. The average weekly wage is compiled by dividing the total quarterly payroll of employees covered by UI programs by the average monthly number of these employees. This number, then, is divided by the number of weeks in the quarter. It is to be noted, therefore, that over-the-year wage changes for geographic areas may reflect shifts in the composition of employment by industry, occupation, and such other factors as hours of work. Thus, wages may vary among counties, metropolitan areas, or states for reasons other than changes in the average wage level. Data for all states, Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), counties, and the nation are available on the BLS Web site at <http://www.bls.gov/cew/>; however, data in QCEW press releases have been revised (see Technical Note below) and may not match the data contained on the Bureau's Web site.

Additional statistics and other information

An annual bulletin, *Employment and Wages*, features comprehensive information by detailed industry on establishments, employment, and wages for the nation and all states. *Employment and Wages Annual Averages, 2004* is now available for sale from the United States Government Printing Office, Superintendent of Documents, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 15250, telephone 866-512-1800, outside of Washington, D.C. Within Washington, D.C., the telephone number is 202-512-1800. The fax number is 202-512-2104. The bulletin is now available in a portable document format (PDF) on the BLS Web site at <http://www.bls.gov/cew/cewbultn04.htm>. Also, the quarterly press release, County Employment and Wages, presents employment and wage data for the largest counties in the U.S. and is available at <http://www.bls.gov/cew/>.

Information in this release will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: 202-691-5200; TDD message referral phone number: 1-800-877-8339. For personal assistance or further information on the Quarterly Covered Employment and Wages Program, as well as other Bureau programs, contact the New York-New Jersey Information Office at (212) 337-2400 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. ET.

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita

The measures of employment and wages reported in this news release reflect the impact of Hurricane Katrina and ongoing labor market trends. Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast on August 29, 2005, with catastrophic effects in parts of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. This event occurred after the August QCEW reference period and before the September period. Its effects are first reflected in the September QCEW employment counts and the wage totals for the third quarter of 2005. QCEW nonresponse adjustment methods were modified for September 2005 to better reflect the impact of the hurricane in parts of Louisiana and Mississippi. For more information, see the QCEW section of the Katrina coverage on the BLS Web site (<http://www.bls.gov/katrina/qcewquestions.htm>).

Hurricane Rita made landfall September 24, after the September reference period. The impact of this event did not warrant changes to QCEW methodology for the third quarter of 2005.

TECHNICAL NOTE

QCEW data are the sums of individual establishment records reflecting the number of establishments that exist in a county or industry at a point in time. For this reason, county and industry data are not designed to be used as a time series.

The preliminary QCEW data presented in this release may differ from data released by the individual states as well as from the data presented on the BLS Web site. The potential differences result from several causes. Differences between BLS and State published data may be due to the continuing receipt, review and editing of UI data over time. On the other hand, differences between data in this release and the data found on the BLS Web site are the result of adjustments made to improve over-the-year comparisons. Specifically, these adjustments account for administrative (noneconomic) changes such as a correction to a previously reported location or industry classification. Adjusting for these administrative changes allows users to more accurately assess changes of an economic nature (such as a firm moving from one county to another or changing its primary economic activity) over a 12-month period. Currently, adjusted data are available only from BLS press releases.

Table 1. Covered¹ employment and wages in the United States, New Jersey, and 15 large counties, third quarter 2005²

Area	Employment			Average weekly wage ³		
	September 2005 (thousands)	Percent change, September 2004-05 ⁴	Level 2005	National rank by level ⁵	Percent change, 2004-05 ⁴	National rank by percent change ⁵
United States ⁶	132,929.3	2.0	\$777	--	6.1	--
New Jersey.....	3,960.8	1.2	928	--	5.8	--
Atlantic.....	149.3	1.1	698	201	4.5	244
Bergen.....	450.2	0.5	964	31	5.9	149
Burlington.....	200.5	0.5	853	70	7.8	47
Camden.....	210.8	0.5	804	91	7.9	42
Essex.....	358.4	0.7	998	21	5.3	194
Gloucester.....	105.2	4.0	712	183	4.7	232
Hudson.....	239.1	1.5	1,024	15	4.0	263
Mercer.....	223.6	2.8	987	26	5.2	203
Middlesex.....	392.4	-0.1	960	32	2.0	302
Monmouth.....	257.8	1.2	828	77	5.1	209
Morris.....	283.7	-0.1	1,086	12	5.2	203
Ocean.....	150.4	1.0	669	246	7.7	51
Passaic.....	176.3	-0.2	929	40	19.0	1
Somerset.....	171.3	3.2	1,148	10	4.4	248
Union.....	226.7	(7)	977	28	(7)	--

¹ Includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

² Data are preliminary.

³ Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

⁴ Percent changes were computed from quarterly employment and pay data adjusted for noneconomic county reclassifications.

⁵ Ranking does not include the county of San Juan, Puerto Rico.

⁶ Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

⁷ Data do not meet BLS or State agency disclosure standards.

Table 2. Covered¹ employment and wages by state, third quarter 2005²

Area	Employment	Average weekly wage ³			
	September 2005 (thousands)	Average weekly wage	National rank by level ⁴	Percent change, 2004-05	National rank by percent change ⁴
United States ⁵	132,929.3	\$777	-	6.1	-
Alabama.....	1,905.9	669	32	6.4	17
Alaska.....	320.2	797	13	5.6	30
Arizona.....	2,511.8	748	20	8.2	1
Arkansas.....	1,165.7	599	46	4.9	43
California.....	15,443.3	887	6	7.0	8
Colorado.....	2,212.1	808	11	7.3	7
Connecticut.....	1,665.2	966	2	5.3	38
Delaware.....	420.1	823	9	7.0	8
District of Columbia.....	666.4	1,265	1	4.5	48
Florida.....	7,801.6	708	26	8.1	2
Georgia.....	3,960.8	748	20	5.2	40
Hawaii.....	606.0	714	24	5.8	23
Idaho.....	635.5	605	45	6.0	19
Illinois.....	5,820.7	825	8	5.9	21
Indiana.....	2,916.3	689	29	5.2	40
Iowa.....	1,461.1	641	37	6.1	18
Kansas.....	1,315.3	659	34	6.5	15
Kentucky.....	1,779.5	651	35	5.2	40
Louisiana.....	1,770.8	637	39	6.9	10
Maine.....	606.0	631	42	4.6	46
Maryland.....	2,526.5	854	7	7.6	5
Massachusetts.....	3,193.3	947	3	4.5	48
Michigan.....	4,353.1	787	15	4.1	50
Minnesota.....	2,671.9	790	14	4.9	43
Mississippi.....	1,098.4	573	49	5.9	21
Missouri.....	2,696.2	691	27	5.5	33
Montana.....	424.2	563	51	7.4	6
Nebraska.....	896.7	633	41	5.3	38
Nevada.....	1,242.5	750	19	6.7	12
New Hampshire.....	630.7	772	16	5.8	23
New Jersey.....	3,960.8	928	5	5.8	23
New Mexico.....	791.0	629	43	6.8	11
New York.....	8,394.8	941	4	5.7	26
North Carolina.....	3,903.7	690	28	5.7	26
North Dakota.....	335.4	581	48	6.0	19
Ohio.....	5,360.6	723	23	5.5	33
Oklahoma.....	1,482.5	612	44	5.7	26
Oregon.....	1,683.4	714	24	5.6	30
Pennsylvania.....	5,597.6	764	18	5.7	26
Rhode Island.....	488.9	736	22	4.1	50
South Carolina.....	1,831.2	637	39	5.6	30
South Dakota.....	381.6	567	50	5.4	35
Tennessee.....	2,724.0	689	29	4.6	46
Texas.....	9,659.3	767	17	6.7	12
Utah.....	1,135.1	647	36	6.6	14

See footnotes at end of table.

Table 2. Covered¹ employment and wages by state, third quarter 2005² -- continued

Area	Employment	Average weekly wage ³			
	September 2005 (thousands)	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level ⁴	Percent change, 2004-05	National ranking by percent change ⁴
Vermont.....	303.4	\$663	33	4.7	45
Virginia.....	3,617.7	815	10	7.7	4
Washington.....	2,820.6	801	12	6.5	15
West Virginia.....	702.9	589	47	5.4	35
Wisconsin.....	2,783.4	688	31	5.4	35
Wyoming.....	263.4	638	38	8.0	3
Puerto Rico.....	1,037.4	435	(6)	3.8	(6)
Virgin Islands.....	44.0	616	(6)	2.8	(6)

¹ Includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

² Data are preliminary.

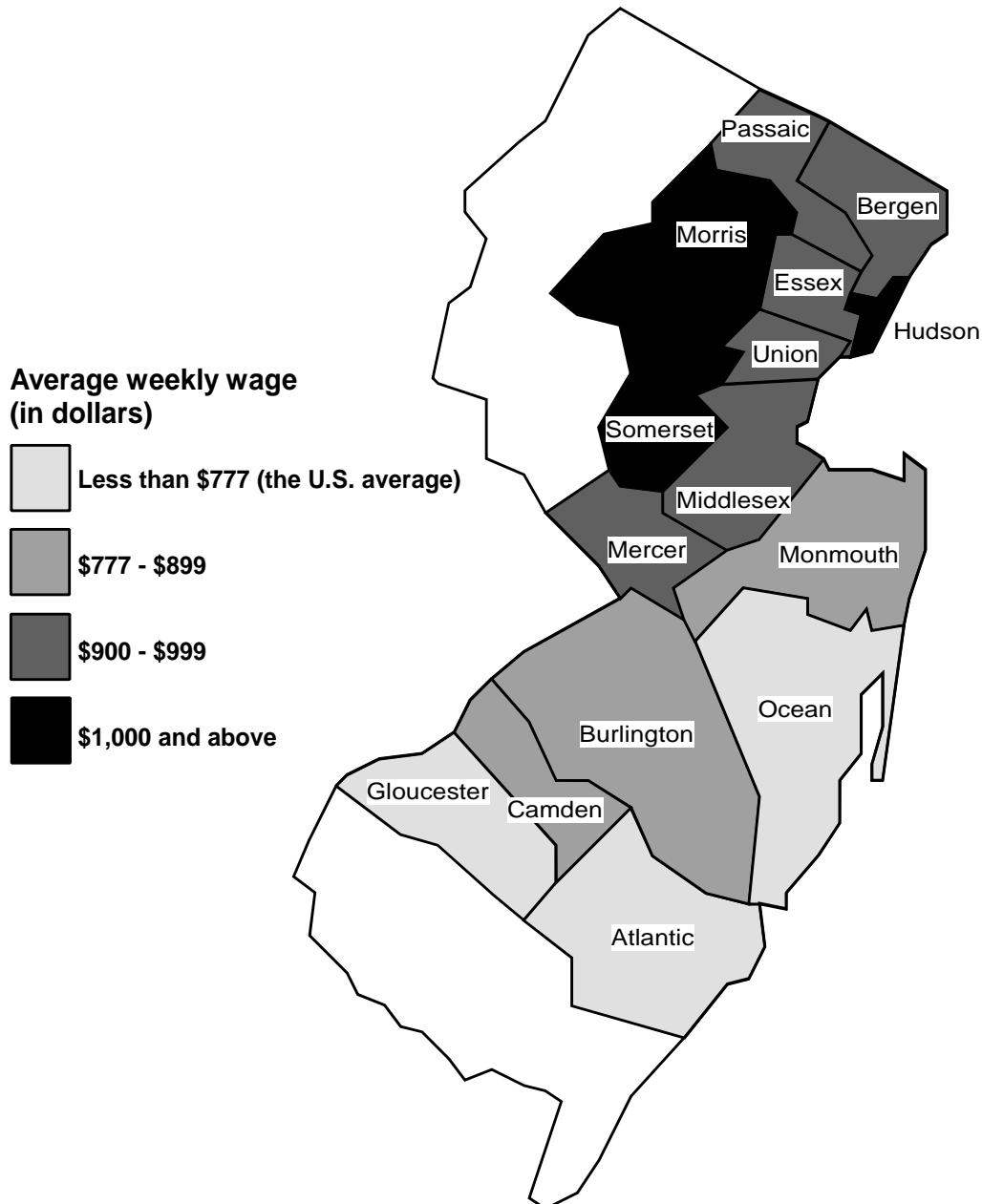
³ Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

⁴ Ranking does not include Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

⁵ Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

⁶ Data not included in the national ranking.

**Chart 1. Average weekly wages, large counties
in New Jersey, third quarter 2005**



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, June 2006